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AS ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF

THE FIRST CHURCH IN PORTLAND, ME.

JANUARY 31, 1855.

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THE GIFT OF

The Terms of the Gospel Trust:

A

SERMON

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1962

BY GEORGE E. ELLIS.

PORTLAND:
PUBLISHED BY GEORGE R. DAVIS.
1855.

BX
9861
P67
E44
1855

BOSTON:
PRINTED BY JOHN WILSON AND SON,
22, School Street.

E586.11
P837E

SERMON.

1 Thess. ii. 4: "As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel."

The Christian Church — each living generation of Christians — is put in trust with the gospel. Our faith in the gospel, of course, involves the belief that there is still, and ever will be, as there ever has been, a divine guardianship exercised over it by God, and that Christ still liveth to advance his own kingdom. We do not forget these superhuman agencies, when we say with the Apostle, that each Christian generation is put in trust with the gospel. The sacred deposit is committed to our love, our care, our wise and faithful use. We inherit it that we may transmit it, receiving a blessing from it as it passes through our trust. It is subject to the conditions which conscience and responsibility attach to every inherited trust, whether in land or money, in liberty, in wisdom, or in virtue; while an additional sanctity invests it, because it has concern with interests not measured or bounded by this earth.

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The gospel, in its original substance, is a trust to all ages. In its own pure, simple essence, as it came from the life and doctrine of Christ, it is still the fresh inheritance of all generations; the newest, because an unexhausted, contribution to the world's best wealth. It was called "the everlasting gospel" by those who first proclaimed it; and we, who live so far down on the line of its history, are witnesses in our day that its unfailing springs are still fed by the power and grace of God. And, beside the original trust which the gospel committed to its disciples, we inherit all that they have added to it; all its accumulations of testimony and experience, its established usages and institutions. It comes to us with the gatherings of time; with the demonstrations of its own working power; with the tokens of all its conflicts with its foes, though without a scar; with no infirmity of years. The accumulations of experience and controversy, which time has associated with the trust of the gospel for us, sometimes instruct and sometimes perplex us. Often does the wish rise in the hearts of Christians, that they might have lived in its first age, or have been privileged to listen to its earliest teachers. But we inherit the trust. In our churches, as in all the other fellowships of human life, we mark the steady progress which changes our fleeting generations. Each precious trust passes, day by day, to new hands; and, as it is transferred, its terms are again set forth.

A thought like this at once attaches a solemn meaning to the occasion which is now engaging us. The Head of the Church has appointed pastors and teachers, in long succession, to serve, in sacred things, the fellowships formed among his disciples, and among those who may be won to be his disciples. A mind skilled in tracing out, through history and the fluctuating aspects of life, the many curious changes under which the ministry of the gospel has been discharged from age to age, might bring a show of argument to prove that all the conditions of this ministry depend entirely upon the free choice and agency of those who exercise or accept it. It might be argued, that preaching, the support of religious institutions, the relation between a minister and his people, — ranging over the whole space between a priestly sacrificer and a friendly instructor, — the meaning attached to religious ordinances, and, in fact, the interpretation given to the gospel, had been the subjects of so much change of opinion and practice as to divest the gospel of all the stable conditions of a trust requiring some rigid terms in its transmission, and to prove that only man, and man's devices and inclinations, are concerned in it. But such an argument, however ingeniously constructed and however ably maintained, would fail to win the warrant of truth. For, in simple fact, the conditions which attend the gospel, as a transmitted trust, are the most permanent and unchanging, and the least dependent upon human construction or

caprice, of any conditions affixed to any inherited legacy from the past to the present and the future. All the title-deeds by which land and property on the earth are transmitted become, in the course of ages, inextricably confused, and finally inoperative and obsolete. No instrument can be drawn by the most skilful pen, which will not become unintelligible or inapplicable in a few centuries of time. All trust-deeds, legacies, entailed charities, and endowments, which involve conditions of opinion or specified uses, or are restricted to a particular management, or devoted to the benefit of any particular class of persons, fail, sooner or later, to serve the ends which they had in view. There is something that provokes a smile, if it do not move our melancholy, as we read the old testaments and instruments by which land or gold was bequeathed, even within the last thousand years, to sacred or charitable uses. The title-deeds employ the word "*forever*"; the legacies were to hold good "to the end of the world;" and they provide that men holding certain offices or certain opinions should administer the transmitted bounty, whether in loaves of bread or in lessons of wisdom. But, when the terms of such trusts are antiquated, the deeds become curious relics in our museums. So is it with all the trusts which man can create and transmit. And rightly so. For, allowing a limited privilege to those who are leaving their portion of the earth's goods behind them at death to direct the inheritance of it

for one or two generations, and even to fetter that inheritance by conditions of belief or opinion, we must restrain that privilege of the dying from interfering with the just rights of the living. For each living generation must be free to use the soil of the earth, and to adapt the conveniences and institutions of society to its own best and most intelligent purposes. All the trusts, therefore, which men devise, transmit, and inherit, must admit of alteration in their conditions and terms from age to age. But the sacred trust of the gospel is secured from all such fluctuating changes. This is a divine gift. Its essence is truth, which is unchanging. Its terms are the same for all ages. It is the everlasting gospel. It is for us only to learn the conditions of the trust, and to comply with them.

A Christian minister does indeed occupy many hours of thought and study upon the different and the seemingly discordant views entertained about the gospel. But he has not learned the best and holiest lesson of that gospel, till the experience of its power in his own heart has made him indifferent to every strife of words, and brought him into some fellowship of sympathy with the devout and the earnest of every Christian communion. The asperities of sectarian zeal, the bitterness of controversy, have yielded in our churches to the grateful conviction, that the truth which we are all seeking will be more likely to be found by each one of us in the harmonies of the

Christian spirit, than in the conflicts of creeds. We need not mourn over the passionate contests by which religious fellowships have been sundered, if such experience has left us assured, once for all, of its most valuable moral, that, while men are quarrelling about the terms of the gospel trust, the Mediator of the Covenant locks up the blessings of the legacy, in heaven's high Court of Chancery, from all of us, and bids us be reconciled to one another before we can expect to be heirs with him. More grateful is it to our hearts, on an occasion like this, to awaken in our own breasts the sentiments which we ought to share with all who have received a precious faith with us.

Let us yield ourselves to the most grateful of all the Christian sentiments or emotions which the spirit of this occasion will impart. There have been, there will yet be, occasions on which Christian pulpits — consecrated to truth as well as to peace, to righteousness as well as to charity — have uttered, and will need to utter, words that enter into a ministry of strife. But not here, not now, have we such an occasion. This fair city, with its happy homes and its well-sustained churches, is to receive a new laborer in a work, which, whenever it is faithfully performed, always secures this happy result, — of proving that the common Christian heart judges justly and kindly of a form of belief that can minister, with power and effect, to the various sins and trials of human life.

More deeply and solemnly does the truth impress itself on all our hearts, as our years increase, and sober thought and sincere feeling decide our own religious convictions, that there is an element in the gospel which no true disciple of it can fail to discern as standing unquestioned by controversy, and unappropriated by any sect. In whatever light, then, we study the gospel, our final aim must be that which we will now assume as giving its spirit to this occasion, — the aim to understand its terms as a Covenant of richest blessings from God to the human race.

The commencement of a new ministry over this ancient church invites us to present anew to our minds the great conditions under which we accede to the trust of the gospel. These conditions may be set forth, without any ingenious distinctions, or exhaustive attempts to say all that might or ought to be said on so great a theme. They may be simply stated, and left, for the most part, to be filled out and enforced by all those to whom they may have the prime value of truth. I will mention three chief conditions under which we receive the gospel as a sacred trust from God; conditions which will be found to engage respectively our minds, our hearts, and our active efforts in life. First, We must understand the gospel; second, We must believe it; third, We must obey it. Only in fulfilling those three conditions can we be faithful to the sacred trust which God has committed to us. No distinction need be traced between

the nature or the amount of the duties of pastor or people, as regards either of these conditions. They will be found to involve the whole substance of the gospel, alike in its theory, its sentiment, and its practice; and they will show how fidelity to our trust is made to ensure its blessings.

I. The first condition for a faithful discharge of the trust committed to us in the gospel is, that we UNDERSTAND THE GOSPEL; that we have an intelligent, clear, and satisfactory view of its purpose, its essence, and its work, of its value, its authority, and power. An intelligent, clear, and satisfactory view of any thing that concerns or interests us should always be to us an object of paramount importance. One well-defined idea, one penetrating gaze of mind, one close grasp of thought, upon any serious and momentous subject, turns a blaze of light upon it. God has established such a relation of harmony between truth and the methods for discovering it, that we can find truth only when we set upon the search for it, and do not wish to find any thing else. Truth is a great mine, which furnishes the metal for the very tools with which we work it. As, in acceding to any trust, especially one which conferred favors on ourselves, while it pledged us to fidelity in its discharge, our first desire would be to understand all its terms and obligations; so our first great concern with the gospel is to inform ourselves of its source, its substance, and its purpose. The blessing which it confers on us

and on others depends, for the grateful sense of its appreciation at least, if not for every thing like a real participation in it, upon our own intelligent estimate of its value.

The first thought which may suggest itself to our minds on this point is, that it is not easy to understand the gospel; but, on the contrary, that it is very difficult. The gospel is an ancient, if not an antiquated, trust. It is perplexed, in its written records, with questions of meaning and interpretation. It is disputed as regards its authority. It is contested as to its terms. It is resisted or rejected by those to whom it proffers its covenant of blessings. We should account it difficult to understand any system of opinions or faith which had been wholly constructed by men, if eighteen centuries had passed over it, and the records in which it was set forth had been subjected to the mutations of words and languages for the expression of thought. A merely human philosophy of morals and duties would, under these circumstances, perplex our minds. How much more, then, we say, will the gospel be difficult of comprehension, as involving a divine element, as combining a heavenly agency with its records drawn from earthly registers, and as claiming that things all unseen are more substantial than the palpable objects of sense!

Now, it is not to be denied that there is a point, in the application of our inquisitive or reasoning faculties to the study of the gospel, at which we

encounter mystery; and, if mystery is to us nothing but a perplexity, there is no available relief for us. Where the simply moral or didactic tone of the gospel gives place to counsels and appeals involving spiritual truths, there comes in the peculiar element of the gospel, which will not yield to any scientific or philosophic analysis, because it is no longer the wisdom of men, but the wisdom of God. The Saviour uttered every one of his moral lessons in language perfectly intelligible to men, and in terms the truth of which any one may verify by actual trial in life. Yet what would all these lessons have been to us, without the sanction of those other words, — "This is my beloved Son: hear ye him"? But the voice which spoke those words was a voice out of the cloud. Certainly, the first condition which we are to settle with ourselves, when we apply the faculties which God has given to us to the gospel as a message from him, is this; that our reason, our understanding, instead of making itself the arbiter or judge of revelation, is itself to be taught something which it never knew before. Our minds acquire a new faculty from the contemplation of the mysterious elements involved in the gospel.

If we subject to a careful observation the effects manifested in the training and exercise of the human mind, as it engages its innate powers upon the various subjects of thought, study, and intellectual interest, we are struck by many tokens of the surprising truth,

that a new or a dormant faculty is developed from the mind akin to each subject upon which it exercises itself. As a pupil is set to learn the languages, the arts, or the sciences, he actually, though perhaps unconsciously, employs a faculty within himself which is as new to himself as is the subject on which he employs it. He opens a new apartment in his mind to receive the new knowledge to which it may give entertainment; and some unemployed servant of his mind is at once commissioned to wait upon the new guest. When the student of truth realizes within himself the faculty for discerning and enjoying truth; when the poet brings within his range of actual life the materials of which he takes possession by his imagination, — there is, in each case, a token from the compound elements of the inner being that it contains a capacity for understanding each form and method of truth through a process akin and congenial with each. Among these various aptitudes of the inner being, there is one suited to the perception of gospel truth.

The sooner we rid ourselves of the vain fancy that the authority and value of the gospel are to be decided only through the application of our own critical tests to its mysterious elements, the sooner shall we ourselves feel the inspiring power of its super-earthly wisdom. The less we exercise of boastful presumption concerning the secrets of God, the more vigorous will our reason be for the work which it really has to

perform in the service of the understanding. Let us yield to faith where God is teaching us, that we may exert our strength where God leaves us most to ourselves. Where the water is the deepest, if it be only calm, the swimmer needs the least of active motion in his own limbs to buoy him up. He may allow himself to float, and will be safe, if he be tranquil in his heart. In the shallows, let him make the most of his own muscles. And so it is that over the deep places of truth, amid its unsounded abysses, we shall not need to toss ourselves in wearying efforts, if we will but yield ourselves to the sustaining power of the great flood of mystery.

We must feel that the very best preparation of heart and mind for understanding the gospel is to approach it with the full expectation of finding in it a solemn, penetrating, amazing message, which it is for God, and not for ourselves, to interpret. "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law," is the prayer which unseals the mysteries that only perplex the understanding. The lifting power, the glow and energy of a trusting, suppliant piety, is the preparation which we are to bring to the study of the gospel. Those who, in every age, have been its meekest disciples, have been the most learned in its wisdom, and the most perfect in its virtues. The briefest, and, at the same time, the most complete sentence in which the Christian records present the whole authority, substance, intent,

and effect of the gospel is that sentence which pronounces it to be "the power of God unto salvation." Of that power we are to be the subjects and recipients, not the critics or judges of its method. For the alternative is obvious and conclusive, without another word spent upon its conditions, that, if there be a divine element in the gospel, we cannot understand or penetrate all the mysterious relations which it involves; but, if there be in it no divine element, then it is no longer a gospel.

So much, at least, as this it is needful that we always re-affirm to ourselves, when we set ourselves to what we call an intelligent understanding of the gospel. The understanding itself must be quickened and spiritualized by the gospel, that it may pursue the high and solemn task, for which, when so furnished, God will give it a teachable, as well as an inquiring faculty.

But, when the inquirer is thus furnished with an illumined and a teachable mind for the study of the gospel, that he may understand the terms of its high trust, enough of difficulty still remains to task all his efforts. There are three different methods, by which, especially in these inquisitive times, the authority and the purpose of the gospel are investigated; viz., the historical, the philosophical, and the experimental method. It is well to claim and to allow for each of these methods a lawful range of inquiry, and a proper satisfaction in its results, when it is fairly pursued.

The gospel must be historically true, and philosophically true, and experimentally true: no believer of it will hesitate to assert and to vindicate all that. So far as the gospel, in its records, is committed to dates in history, to written documents from the inspired pens of those contemporary with its origin, and to monuments of its annals in the lands over which its light first dawned, it must have credentials of no doubtful warrant. So far as the contents of the gospel are justly subject to the questionings of the highest philosophy of life and of truth, they must be proved to be in harmony with God's other oracles; for this is but affirming that the light which shines upon the surface of the earth is of the same essence with the light of which the sun in heaven is composed. And so far as the experience of eighteen centuries will admit of interpretation as having offered confirmation or illustration of the gospel, experience must be shown to attest that an influence from above the earth has been working benignly upon it. It is more important for us to remind ourselves, that either one of these methods for testing the gospel will be perfectly satisfactory in its results. And it is a grateful fact to be recognized, that every individual can apply some one of those three tests to the gospel. It is not true, as is often alleged, that some persons have no means of assuring themselves by actual trial and inquiry of the gospel evidence. For, if history and philosophy bar out any persons from investigating by

their methods, the method of experiment is left free to all. They can ask themselves what the gospel says to them concerning their own nature, condition, and wants, and what its work is upon heart and life; and this method of examination, as it is free to all, is the best and the most conclusive to all.

The gospel satisfies every inquiry which it prompts, except those inquiries which it gives us reasons of its own for not satisfying. It entitles itself a message of love from God, announcing good news to men. It affirms that the original dispensation of it was planned in purpose before even this earth was arranged as a scene of human life. It was not designed to meet an emergency in the divine government, but to be the fulfilment of a divine method. The gospel dates its first spoken word of promise on the earth to the evening of the day on which the first remorse and blight of sin were settling upon two human beings, as they hid themselves in the thickets of Eden. A succession of inspired prophets, the training of a burdensome law, and the preparatory experience of long and dreary ages, were made the means of exciting the hopes and of fitting the hearts of men to receive it. The gospel defines its own purpose under the large words, Redemption and Salvation, — redemption, say some, from "the wrath of God;" redemption, say others, from the "curse of sin:" and only those dispute *angrily* which of these two sentences best expresses the truth, who do not realize

in their inmost consciousness that they are under either of those dread burdens; for the painful sense that we need redemption will never yield to a very ardent interest in a controversy as to which of two Scripture phrases uses the best terms for expressing our bondage.

So we seek to understand the gospel as a divine instrumentality, through doctrines, precepts, counsels, warnings, and promises, — all kindled with the power of inspired truth, — for saving men from every thing from which it is desirable to be saved: from the bondage of the flesh, and all unrighteousness; from the curse of sin; from an evil heart of unbelief; from superstition and despair; from uncheered grief; from a godless life, and from a hopeless death. To understand the gospel, we have to realize, that, in our natural condition, and so far as all the wisdom and resources of the world can help us, we are in that unredeemed and unsanctified state, which, while it still leaves us enough of the furniture of a religious nature to be conscious of want and risk and sin, makes us dependent upon a power above our own for all relief. Prayer and preaching; ordinances and means of grace; private meditation; self-conflict; the experiences of life to ourselves and to others; the past, with all its burden of instruction and example; and the working testimonies of faith in Christian fellowships and Christian enterprises, — these are our helps for understanding the gospel. We may be

perplexed by the knowledge that the gospel has been so variously understood, and has opened so many controversies. These controversies of men about the gospel are, however, matters of light moment, compared with that controversy between men and God which the gospel is to reconcile. After we have yielded for a while to our natural misgiving that it must be difficult to understand the gospel because men have so differed about it, let us re-assure our confidence by the thought that it must be easy to understand it if its source is from God, and if its design is to save men. What all men need to know will never be perplexed to those whose wisdom is sincerity. Understand your own wants, and you will understand the gospel that is to supply them. One hour of quiet thought, spent each day over a lesson which you have read from the Bible, will show you relations between the teachings of that book and your own heart and life, which you may be trusted to interpret for yourself. I do not forget the fact that many persons affirm that the Bible itself is the source of some of their deepest perplexities, as they seek to understand the gospel. But are they sure that it is the gospel which they are trying to understand, and that it is mainly for its religious and devotional lessons that they are studying the Bible? There are perplexities in every line of it for those who search it to discover them; and these perplexities are its defences against irreverence and curiosity, and the pride of

wisdom. But the whole question, in its simplest form, is this: What does the gospel teach concerning the condition, the duty, and the destiny of man; of his need, and of the means, of salvation from sin and death? It is a question that has been asked by millions of human hearts, and answered to their satisfaction. So far as we are losers by the long space of time which removes us from the age in which the gospel offered a miraculous testimony and demonstration, we are compensated by the multiplied and rich evidences which men and women, in every scene and state of human life, have afforded to us of the effective power of the gospel. In many a humble cottage, in the fireside corner, have simple-hearted disciples mastered the teachings of that divine wisdom which critical students of the Word, with all their wealth of learning, have failed to interpret, even to themselves. While, therefore, we remind ourselves that the first condition involved in the trust which is committed to us in the gospel is that we understand it, let us never forget that its truths are the plainest to its most willing and devout pupils.

II. The second great condition involved in the trust which is committed to us of the gospel is, that we accept it with a hearty and a devout Faith. There are those who seem to make the condition of *belief* in the gospel to take precedence of our first condition, which requires that we understand it. It has been often and earnestly affirmed, that, in order that we

may understand the gospel, we must believe it; that the mind can be brought into a state suitable for its fair examination and study, only when the spirit or the heart has humbly and confidingly bowed in trustful submission to it. It may be, that, in our controversies upon the issue thus raised, we have another of those many contests, mainly through words and vague ideas, which seem to divide those who in reality agree more nearly than they suppose. But, without arguing upon either side of this issue, we may not only allow, but will urge, that whatever may be lacking of an intelligent view of the gospel, after the mind has tasked all its powers of understanding, will always be supplied by the sympathetic help of a devout and trusting faith. Faith is itself one of the most reasonable and necessary exercises of the understanding. There is a wide margin around every page which records our knowledge and our most intelligent views upon any subject; and that unfilled border-space is surrendered up to convictions sustained only by the instincts of a believing heart. After we have done our utmost to comprehend and ratify to our reason all the lofty doctrines of the gospel, we shall feel that its power must lie in its spiritual, rather than in its moral teachings; and that these are breathed into the heart, not spoken into the ears. It would long since have proved fatal to the claims of the religion of Jesus Christ, had men come to realize, or discovered, that it exhausted all its lessons simply in

teaching the mind. The gospel would not have won the allegiance, even of a single generation of disciples, had it done nothing but instruct them in the truths of an earthly wisdom. It is because there is a more mysterious instinct, a deeper want, in the soul of man, that all ancient wisdom failed to furnish life to true piety. The power of philosophy lies, after all, in its deficiencies, in its confessions of what it cannot do; for, when it leaves us upon an ocean through which it owns that it cannot guide us, it has taught us its best lesson in teaching us this. It is a weary task for man to be ever chasing after the horizon, where light and darkness meet. His horizon changes just as he changes his own place; but, change as he may his own place, he can never alter the fixed proportion of light and darkness to his mortal vision. Better is it to stand convinced that that solemn horizon sweeps all around us, and embraces all of heaven, as well as the earth. All the rays of earthly intellect, pride, and genius, which promise successively to give man light for his spirit, fail to abide by him and to meet his wants. He passes through them, and beyond their aid. They go out one by one, as the stars of midnight to the lone traveller. There is something that is dangerously deceptive in the boastful pretences of our modern philosophy, which, having appropriated the substance of Christian truth on some moral and spiritual themes, assumes to teach them as parts of a common human wisdom, and then would shift them

from the charge of faith, to which they are committed by the gospel, to the charge of natural reason. The truths which the gospel teaches are turned from moral into religious truths by being rescued from the cold dealing of the understanding, and entrusted to a living and confiding faith. The one sole question which the Saviour asked of those who heard his own words, and felt the power of his mighty works, was, "Believest thou?" so that even eyesight, hearing, and the experience of his blessings, did not make needless an exercise of faith.

The exercise of faith is the condition by which we receive our own personal share of truth and blessing from that sacred trust of the gospel. The world has long been laboring to find the true meaning of the word "faith," as it is used in the New Testament; to decide its terms and value; to discover how much importance is there ascribed to it; and to prove that its power and influence over the heart and life are or may be great enough to warrant all that is said about its acceptance with God as a means for saving the soul of man. The simplest solution of every question that can be raised on any of these points will be found in reminding ourselves, that the gospel uses the word "faith" in a sense all its own, — in a strictly peculiar sense. The gospel means by faith a grace or virtue, or spiritual affection, which will secure all the peace and joy of believing. We must, therefore, give to the word, and what it signifies, an interpre-

tation that will fill out and justify all the power that is ascribed to it. If we find that what we are thinking of as faith will not bear the stress which the gospel lays upon it, and cannot do what the gospel says faith can do, then we must conclude that we have not got the gospel idea of faith; and we must search till we find *that*. The greatest and the most solemn of all questions which our religion moves us to ask, is this: "What shall I do to be saved?" And who that has asked that question has not felt the amazement caused by the reply made to it in the Sacred Scriptures? Our question is, "What shall I *do?*" as if *doing* of some sort — action, effort, labor, of some kind, and that of the best kind — were to be indicated in the answer. But from that answer the word *do* is omitted: effort and labor are lost sight of, save as they may be involved in the sure *effects* of faith. For the answer is, "*Believe* — believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." What alternative is left to a sincere inquirer than to find a meaning for belief which will fill out and fulfil that blessed promise? It is "with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness," — unto that kind of righteousness which alone can save. The conclusion is obvious to the humblest capacity, that the gospel means by *faith* that submission and exercise of the heart by which we appropriate to ourselves the whole saving power of the gospel. It is by faith that we are indoctrinated with Christian truths; it is by faith

that we derive from Christ a new element, to be worked into and incorporated with our natural heart. It is by faith that we enter into the trust committed to us in the gospel, as the means which God has provided for *our* salvation.

"Faith," says one of the best-accepted definitions of it, "is a supernatural grace." This definition needs to be filled out with the words, "needed for the receiving and appropriating of supernatural truths and influences." The Apostle says, "All men have not faith." Very true. But what then? He certainly means to imply, that this is all the more reason why they should attain it and exercise it. All men have not eyesight; but this fact does not bring into question the truth that the exercise of the faculty of vision is the means by which we are introduced to a sensible knowledge of the glories of the outward universe. The lack of faith, like the lack of eyesight, may be a misfortune in some cases; but more often is it the result of some neglect in the use of its means, or of some waywardness in the exercise of those spiritual elements which God has wrought into the constitution of a human being. We are too apt to conceive of faith as merely an effect wrought by religion, — one of the fruits which grow from it. Do not the Scriptures represent it rather as a means of religion? Of course, the proper and devout and consistent exercise of faith always clears and strengthens and increases it; but must we not, first of all, begin

with exercising it, — take for granted the existence in us of its elements, and the existence outside of us of the objects on which it may exercise itself? We read that "he who would come to God" must approach him with a belief, already formed and cherished, that God exists; that there is a God; and that he is not merely a Power, but a righteous and a benignant Being. "*He that cometh to God must believe* that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

In one word, it is by faith that religion, in all its truths and hopes, is made a reality to us, — the greatest reality, the only reality. The Christian world has paid a terrible and a sad penalty for all its cold controversies, and all its limited measurements of faith. For it is because that word sweeps such a scale of meanings, higher or lower, that religion itself has only proportionate degrees of reality. We find creeds and forms and standards graduated to every taste, and to every degree of sensibility and sincerity in men; and the gospel is made to be what any one wishes it to be to him. And this has familiarized us with the deplorable consequence, that religion, instead of engaging the profoundest and the most penetrating form of belief, is held by very many only upon the heart's surface, and by some as a possibility among other possibilities, of which we make an equally becoming recognition when we believe it and when we doubt it. Ask your neighbor if he believes the

views in which he is at variance with you, in the same way in which he believes that he must take food in order that he may live. Ask him, and ask yourself, if you both hold your common religious convictions with all the profound assurance with which you hold the belief that you must both die. See that you pursue the inquiry till you discover what sort of belief is alone in harmony with reality. That is the sort which the gospel calls faith. Then apply the term to that exercise and conviction of heart by which you appropriate to yourself the truth in the gospel. No longer are you concerned with it as a mere speculation: it takes possession of you as a living energy, a benedictive spirit, a helping, saving influence.

There are many sad tokens, at the present day, that there is less of real, simple, earnest faith than in previous ages of the church. The true test for deciding whether this is indeed so, is by measuring the reality which invests religion to us, compared with the reality which it had for its disciples in other days. We know by what trials faith has been proved in this world; through what fearful straits it has led its unflinching disciples. We know what precious and ever-grateful works faith has wrought on this earth. Its records are the treasured legacy to all our hearts; and, when we read them, we say, How real was religion to these men and women of faith; how painful were their trials, and yet how cheerfully were they endured; how barren of all our comforts and resources

were their lives, and yet what a radiance of joy was shed around all their deprivations! What a reality to them was worship; what a hallowed day was the sabbath; how reverently did they bow in prayer; how earnestly did they listen to the Word; how calmly did they watch by the bedside of parting life; how hopefully did they commit to the last resting-place those who had fallen asleep in Jesus! How intense, how solemn a reality was religion, in all its lessons and hopes, its methods and its duties, to them. And is it not a reality to us? May God avert from our churches, and from the heart of every one of their members, the sad, sad necessity of answering that question as our self-reproaching consciences sometimes warn us that we ought to answer it! Yes, religion is a reality to us. Only we divest it of the solemnities of reality whenever we grow cold at heart to its divine love, or become weary of its pleading counsels, or make idols of this world's goods, or allow the gloom of doubt or the pride of reason to dispute for more than one moment the blessed power of a true living faith in God and Christ. By faith we appropriate to ourselves the whole strength and blessing of the gospel. Our churches are built upon faith; our lives are to be led by it; our prayers are to be kindled by it; our deeds of duty, our works of charity, are to be done by it; and our dying hour must be cheered by its prospects, as its visions, by a change in our vision, are about to be fulfilled to the spirit.

III. There is one other great condition required in the faithful discharge of the trust committed to us in the gospel: it is that we OBEY IT and APPLY IT. This is its active work; the process which turns to profitable use the Lord's money. With an eloquence and an earnestness which amounts to passion, and lacks but little of a cry of despair, the world is pleading that the gospel should be allowed, should be compelled, to do its work. Indeed, the grand trial-test of the evidence of its divine origin is now, for many persons, wholly withdrawn from all questions of historical and textual criticism, and is concentrated upon this one question, — Can the gospel do the work which it has chosen for itself? Can it revolutionize the world into righteousness and holiness? Can it reach and sweeten the embittered springs in the hearts of men, drawing love and mercy and equity from that source whence now flow bitterness and selfishness and all corrupting passions? Can the gospel establish on the earth a kingdom of God; make men really brethren; and show, as its true converts, regenerated, upright, devoted, and earnest men? It has been preached till its texts have become proverbs, and would weary the ear were it not for the sweet music of love and peace and hope which is breathed from their strains. It has been preached faithfully; but it has not been practised. Not a single one even of its least exacting precepts has yet triumphed in a single community of the earth. Uneasy and impatient men,

moved, as they profess, by a zeal to see the purposed work of the gospel accomplished, sometimes speak as if the very gospel stood in their way. When asked to explain themselves, they plead that the gospel is not doing its own work, but is fettered by all sorts of compromises, has hushed its warfare into a protracted truce, and has made unworthy terms with its enemies. So, by a free inversion of the Saviour's own test, that those who would really obey God's will should have a full assurance of what it requires, some men argue that a powerless gospel cannot be a divine gospel. The result is, that ministers and churches stand charged with a breach of trust, in not obeying and applying the gospel.

Familiar as we now are with this charge, the least of all our concerns is to vindicate ourselves against it by words. If we are patient and wise, we shall regard it rather as an awkward way of paying homage to the gospel than as a censorious reflection cast upon our poor selves. Contemplated by the eye of a discerning wisdom, even the assaults made upon Christian creeds and institutions by unbelief, and the slights put upon them and their disciples by those who are impatient of a slow conservatism, even these assaults are but the more urgent tokens that the world needs a working gospel. Those who have reached that blessed repose of inward conviction which has assured their own faith in the gospel are not likely to be disturbed by any assaults upon it, either from criticism

or radicalism. They have translated to themselves the maxim, "Let God be true, though every man be a liar," to mean that the Christian religion has won a place and proved a character, which have settled for ever all preliminary questions as to its truth and value. In no single class of men is there more evident witness borne to the value of the whole complement of Christian virtues and graces, and of the harm that comes from the neglect of even the gentlest of them all, than in the class of reformers. They are fighting the Lord's battle, and, for the most part, with the Lord's weapons; though sometimes they do sharpen those weapons in the workshops of the Philistines, forgetting that there is now "a smith in the land of Israel" who would put the right temper into them. (1 Sam. xiii. 20.)

But let us face the real issue presented to us by those who are impatient under the methods now used for the application of the gospel to the social relations of life. I will not allow that they are more earnest or sincere, nor will I judge them to be less wise, well-balanced, or practical, than others. The issue opened may stand apart from all personalities, all harsh judgments, and be weighed as presenting a case for all the discretion, candor, and single-heartedness which any one may bring to it. The issue is the same familiar problem which was offered to the world when the gospel proclaimed its first message to man. That message announced a peace that was to be won by a

conflict; the deepest, truest, most perfect peace, to be attained only by the sharpest, the intensest, and the longest conflict. And this problem has ever since been illustrating its own high conditions, as in each one of the most eminent of its disciples in every age, so upon the great public fields of the world. The gospel has racked and pierced with despair the stoutest of human hearts, before it gave them repose; as men of various creeds, but of uniform experience, have testified; as Augustine and Luther and Fox and Bunyan and Baxter, with countless others, have revealed to us. And, through every scene of human life, the work of the gospel has ever been like that of the restorers of the wall of Jerusalem, — one hand for fighting, and one for building; a work of subversion and of renewal, of destruction and of reconstruction. There must be a deep unity, which, at the bottom, harmonizes these seemingly opposite elements, as there is in the universe, though the most prevailing creed of all ages has thought it necessary to believe in two conflicting spiritual agencies, — the one good, and the other evil. The long contest which the gospel has pursued on the earth has made us familiar with its revolutionizing work, has fully informed us what human life and human society ought to be, and has brought us to realize just what sort of resistance opposes its work. Now, one class of those who cherish a Christian zeal and hope insist most upon what ought to be, and are less considerate of the means to

insure it. Another class, with the same zeal and hope, set their thoughts chiefly upon the resistance which obstinately opposes, so as to make progress but slow; and their risk is, that they may be driven to temporize, and compromise and abate the peremptory demands of righteousness, because men will not at once obey them all. Yet it occurs to us that the very issue which so baffles us was met, in all its original intensity of strife, in the very first ages of the gospel. We are amazed, when we read back into the first centuries of our era, by the bold and unflinching confidence with which the Christian leaven undertook its work upon all the Pagan corruptions, and essayed, by a few glowing truths held in living hearts, to alter customs, to subvert institutions, and to change the foundation-principles of all thought and life. If the gospel could do that in its first days, why can it not do it in these its latest days? The simple answer is, that it is easier to deal with Pagan corruptions than with a nominal Christianity. It is easier to sow a new field than to weed an old one. We have to reconcile ourselves to that slow and resisted course towards sure progress which has ever been the condition of all real Christian success. While Christian ministers, from their pulpits, are preaching that peace under the gospel ought to prevail over the world, and will prevail when the gospel shall make men what they ought to be, Cabinet ministers, seated round their council-tables, are still planning campaigns, and send-

ing their thousands of soldiers here or there, and sending the lint and the nurses after them; and this is dealing with men as they are. And men will be dealt with as they are, till they can be changed to what they ought to be. When the Cardinal Prime Minister Richelieu and Father Joseph were once planning a campaign, the Father put his finger over a certain point in the course of a river marked on a map before them, and said, "Here the troops must cross." "You forget," replied the Cardinal, "that your finger is not a bridge." These two ecclesiastics were employed upon business sadly unbecoming their office as ministers of the Prince of Peace. But, had they been engaged in their own more appropriate work, the one who suggested the necessity of *means* would have proved himself wiser than he who was planning without them. The Saviour spake a certain parable unto his disciples, "because they thought that the kingdom of God should *immediately* appear." The parable is one which the Christian world has ever since been listening to; and, from it, has become content with seeing signs and tokens from afar off, as the patriarchs did of a Messiah.

But, while the work of bringing the world to Christ is to be extended over ages of struggle and effort, through countless agencies of good, we have each of us as individuals but a short life in which to perform the work assigned to us. Again, then, would we renew in our own hearts the sense of Christian respon-

sibility. We are responsible beings; and every blessing, every means of knowing our duty, and every means of performing it, pledges us to a higher, a more faithful, a more useful form of life. God has put us in trust with the gospel, and we are its disciples only when we bring forth its fruits. All that there is pleasant and good in mortal life receives a new element of happiness, as well as a rule for its enjoyment, from the doctrine of Jesus Christ. So far as the gospel has done its work in this world, how beautifully, how impressively, has it testified to its divine energy of love! "Is it from heaven, or of men?" is the question, which, to many around us, seems now to be suspended in doubt as to its decision, as indeed it always has been to some. And, after that question has been asked and discussed and decided upon in all sorts of ways, where are we to look for new arguments or testimonies, which shall be independent of the logic or the prejudices of men's minds? Only in our own personal experience of the truth and power of the gospel, as it reads our hearts, and wins them to its peace and piety.

Under bright and hopeful influences are the responsibilities attached to the Christian ministry committed here to-day, to a new servant, at this altar. He accedes to a place in which faithful and pious men have served, under circumstances of peculiar favor from Providence, and of a peculiar attachment between them and their people. During more than a century

and a quarter of our fleeting years, but three pastors have preceded him here; and even they have pursued a joint ministry, which, if summed up in a single account to each of them, covers one hundred and sixty-three years. In the meanwhile, this fair city has taken the place of a rude wilderness; and the early labors of an exposed and industrious company of men and women have been the germ of all the prosperity which now smiles around you. How largely the devoted Christian zeal and piety of the church and its ministers have been concerned in all the trials and the joys which human hearts have experienced here, we will own with gratitude. May the gospel here renew its power, and every heart answer to its lessons, its duties, and its hopes, and so fulfil its trust!

CHARGE.

BY REV. ANDREW P. PEABODY, D.D.

My Friend and Brother, — All that I could say in discharge of the office devolved upon me is comprised in these emphatic words of St. Paul to Timothy, "Take heed unto thyself." It is a fundamental law of mechanics, that quantity and velocity together make up momentum. A feather might dance about through all eternity, or might move with the swiftness of a sunbeam, without acquiring any appreciable momentum. The same law holds good in spiritual dynamics. To ensure valuable results, there must be, not only activity, but quantity of character. Our own souls, such as they are, are our chief instruments of usefulness; and what we accomplish can never transcend the measure of what we are. Your public and private ministrations, my brother, — the words you utter, the offices you perform, — are but small multiplicands, of which your own mass of spiritual experience, your weight of character, is the much larger

multiplier in producing the amount of good you bring to pass. Not in vain did the Baptist remain in the desert till the day of his appearing unto Israel. Not in vain was it that our Saviour passed the first thirty years of his life in retirement, and, during his active ministry, spent those frequent nights in solitary meditation and prayer. It is only by similar self-discipline that the disciple can make any approach to his Master. You put your whole soul into whatever you do; and, if that soul be small and lean and low, a century of the most active industry would leave no mark; but, if your soul be pure and true, rich and full, devout and lofty, there is an intense spiritual momentum in all that you do; your strokes are all blows; your notes, all staccato; your words, as was said of Luther's, "half-battles."

"Take heed unto thyself," — first, intellectually. You are placed here to preach, not yourself, but Jesus Christ. Let the records of the revelation through him be your perpetual and profound study. Those sacred books, — study them as you will, you can never exhaust their riches, or fail to unearth new wealth of meaning. And you always find more than you seek. When you dig for brass, you get gold; when for gold, rubies and diamonds blaze upon your sight. Among those writers, you have one, — St. Paul, — who alone might give you work for a lifetime; in whose Epistles the strata of spiritual, Christian significance grow more and more precious, the deeper you mine them;

through whom you enter into a profounder communion with the mind of Christ than through any other medium; and with whom you might be daily conversant for half a century, and then go to heaven with no wish so dear to your heart, next to union with your Redeemer, as the opportunity of renewing, with that glorious leader of the church militant and triumphant, the themes in which he had inspired and guided your earthly meditations. Let the Scriptures, and whatever may illustrate them, ever occupy the first place in your mental culture. Next to them, I would advise you to be conversant with the poets, orators, and philosophers of classic antiquity; first, as helping you in the analysis of concrete ideas, by carrying you back to their birth-time, and the successive stages of their growth; then, as defining, with peculiar distinctness and impressiveness, the extent of the world's indebtedness to Christ, by showing you the utmost that humanity has ever been able to attain without him; and, finally, as furnishing the purest models of style, and making your own style both flexible and forceful, by familiarity with the two most perfect languages that have ever been spoken or written, — the one the perfection of precision and strength; the other, of grace and beauty. Next, you need extended conversance with the literature of the day; with whatever — be it sound or futile, precious or vile, friendly or hostile to the genius of Christianity — is working on the mind of the age, forming opi-

nions, moulding character. For, while you preach no gospel of to-day, but the everlasting gospel, you need so to preach it that it shall meet precisely the needs of to-day; shall either second or obviate influences at work independently of the pulpit; shall hallow the current thought of the times; shall illustrate the religious bearings, and enforce the religious lessons, of whatever awakens a strong intellectual interest.

"Take heed unto thyself" morally. The gospel that you are, can alone give dignity and force to the gospel that you preach. The world expects more than human faultlessness in the minister; it should have whatever degree of perfectness constant vigilance, a keen sense of right, an ever-active conscience, can create and sustain. Carelessness as to any of what are called the minor moralities, though it may result from inadvertency, not from a hollow heart, will be imputed to the lack of sincerity, and must detract from the efficacy of the public and private ministrations of religion. We have the treasure in earthen vessels, constantly liable to be marred and defaced; and, for the integrity of the treasure, we are bound to take double care of the vessels, that they may always appear vessels of honor, fitted for the noblest uses. To this end, it is not well for us ministers to be continually asking, as is the manner of some, how wide a liberty may be lawful for us; how far we may conform to the fashion of the world, without positive sin; what indulgences of a doubtful, or, what is the same

thing, of a doubted, character, we may allow ourselves in. Far better is it, that, with the great apostle, we study the consciences of the weaker brethren; assert our liberty, without pushing it where it may compromise our professional or Christian reputation; and abstain, with jealous care, from aught by which a brother may stumble, or be scandalized, or made weak; — and this, not for the selfish purpose of winning a reputation for peculiar sanctity, but with reference to the honor of the gospel committed to our charge, and for the sake of that Master who makes the feeblest and humblest of the flock his special care.

Above all, "take heed unto thyself" spiritually. It is from the life hidden with Christ in God, that must flow the issues that shall refresh and gladden the church, win wanderers back to duty, comfort the afflicted, and buoy up the dying with the hope full of immortality. It is from the Delectable Mountains of prayer and serene contemplation, that you are to derive strength to toil, patience to wait, courage to dare, fortitude to endure, persevering love, overcoming faith. Preach always from your own experience, and deepen the fountains of your experience, that your preaching may be rich and fruitful. Look constantly to Jesus; let his image be ever fresh and bright upon the retina of the mind's eye; and preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, as you have made them your own. Present him in the offices in

which you have found him precious. Hold forth the example which you love to follow; the mediation in which you repose your own trust for eternity; the redeeming mercy for which your own heart pours forth its grateful adoration. Expect success in your ministry, only as you realize it in the culture of your own spirit. And, if you indeed walk with God and in fellowship with Christ, believe that you are successful, though the outward blessing be long delayed; believe that the field is ripening for the harvest, though you see not your sheaves. Be not weary in well-doing; for your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.

You are entering a field of labor which has been signally favored in the character and the permanence of the Christian ministrations it has enjoyed. In his presence, I cannot express, as I otherwise would, my profound feeling of your privilege in being associated with him who, for so many years, in the meekness of wisdom and the beauty of holiness, has here broken the bread of life. I welcome you to intimate fellowship with one whose occasional counsel and communion, and whose uniform friendship, kindness, and sympathy, I have accounted as among my choicest blessings. Long may he be spared for the easier service which added years may permit him to render. And I can wish for you no greater joy than that you may be to the children, and the children's children, what he has been to the fathers, — to those that have

gone to their rest and reward; to those who are still the living witnesses of his faithful care and constant love.

And now, my brother, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace. May he enrich you with all spiritual gifts. May the eye that sees you bless you. May the ear that hears you bear witness to you. And, when the Chief Shepherd shall call you to your final account, may you find that the witness of your ministry has been in heaven, and its record on high!

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP.

BY REV. JOSEPH H. ALLEN.

In the name of the churches represented here to-day, especially the associated churches of this State, which have suffered so many a recent loss, and rejoice in so many a recent gain; in the name of the Christian brotherhood we share, and of the hopes, sympathies, and purposes that belong to the profession which claims us both, — I offer you now my frank and cordial salutation, as you enter the field of your future labor. Accept it as it is given; and, in pledge of it, receive this Right Hand of Christian Fellowship.

I congratulate you, my friend and brother, on the cheerful auspices that crown this day. In what is now your home, you are met by the generous and hospitable welcome of this ancient church; your first greeting is in the benignant and honored presence of him with whom you are henceforth associated in a congenial work. It is with confident and abounding

promise that you take up once more your manhood's task. A sphere of duty is about you, amply proportioned to your matured strength. I congratulate you on the privilege of a task, which Providence now assigns you, equal to your highest faculty, demanding the best consecration of your powers. A gospel of reconciliation and of liberty you are to carry where the world's enterprise will meet you; where the energies of a swiftly-expanding commercial life demand a corresponding power and fervor in the declaration of religious truth. Not to the comfort and culture and the refined hospitalities of a prosperous capital do I so heartily bid you welcome, as to that added burden of responsibility, the severer and nobler toil, that may come with increase of years and public confidence; that more strenuous task, and severer self-discipline, which may unfold and ripen the broader harvests of your spiritual life.

I welcome you to your position here as a Christian preacher. It is no light task, as you know already, that is thus laid upon you. The life of the time, as it flows through the thronged and busy streets, and is gathered in great marts of trade; as it is reflected in men's anxious and scheming thought; as it throbs in the pulses of a great nation; as it is found in the want and sorrow of the lowly; as it utters itself in questions that only faith can solve, and confessions of many that only divine love can

reconcile and heal, — all must stamp itself upon the faithful tablets of your soul, thence to be interpreted again in the symbols of the higher life. That task must be achieved in your own spirit, which fits you to be a true teacher of other men. Your own thought must first be reconciled in the faith that prompts your words. Your own culture, and your gathered stores of knowledge, must take on the stamp and signature of Christian truth. Thought must be deepened to conviction, and intellect wrought up into spiritual energy, and experience ripened into faith, before the task laid on you can be worthily accomplished. It is with a great price a man wins that freedom. The blood shall throb in hot surges through his brain in his midnight watches, and the nerve be very weary, and the hair prematurely blanched and thin upon his brow, and his soul shall struggle long in secret with itself, before the spiritual victory is gained which makes him such a messenger as God hath chosen to declare his truth to this generation. Something of that conflict has been doubtless yours, — one which no man can escape, who, relying singly upon God, confronts resolutely the whole problem which challenges his intellect as an honest and religious thinker. To be free in thought, large in mental sympathy, rich in resources of the intellectual life; to do justice to his own powers, and then transform his whole faculty and experience and attainment into the likeness of Chris-

tian faith, — this is his aim, — no less. May the power that comes of a true success in it be yours!

And, again, I welcome you to your task as a Christian pastor. Very pleasant it may be made by others' sympathy, — a perpetual reward and joy to him whose heart is in it, yet with responsibilities as sacred, and duties as trying, as those of any other sphere. In the sunshine of this holiday, therefore, I bid you anticipate the sterner summons to the house of mourning, and the solemn courts of death; for they are never far from the consciousness and heart of one who enters on this service. It may be, that, by private griefs and chastisements, God will fit you to be a son of consolation: if so, I bid you be of good cheer, in the assurance of profounder lessons of that healing faith, and the richer, truer sympathies that will make you a sharer in the blessing of them that mourn. Little children will gather about you, not only as their official teacher, but as their spiritual counsellor and guide: by singleness and innocence of spirit, may you win yourself a hold on their affectionate trust, and draw them within the circle of your own higher sympathies and larger spiritual life! The sick and bereaved, the lonely and suffering, and they that are growing old, will need you for their friend: I welcome you to that most sacred exercise of manly strength, tempered by Christian charity, when it bears the burden of the weak. The condition, wants, and sorrows of the poor, igno-

rant, and depressed, — these fill a large space in the sympathies of every thoughtful man; and I bid you welcome to a ministry so earnest and real in this regard as that which God will require of you here.

I could wish you no higher joy than that in each you may be worthy of your work, and successful in it; that you may find that highest and first success which a man wins in the noble and free unfolding of his powers, and the ripening of his better sympathies. I could give you no higher proof of fraternal confidence and esteem than by setting before you, in this office of greeting and congratulation, the most arduous thought of your Christian calling, as a teacher of truth and a guardian of souls; bidding you take heart in view of its most dread responsibilities and severest demands, and devoutly wishing you God-speed in it, as I do this day.

ADDRESS TO THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY.

BY REV. CYRUS A. BARTOL.

In these services of installation or re-ordination, which, but for my duty's sake, I should be loth to prolong, one person seems to be insulated; and all the rest, like a busy company employed yonder in lading a ship at the wharf, or piling a load on a creature of burden, putting something upon him. The hearts and interests of all being thus imposed, amid the concentrated gaze of the eyes of all, to make every thing sure, he receives a special charge how to move beneath this weight, and transport these valuables of human life and the human soul over the rough road of time into safe immortality. For a sign of help that they will stand by him, a Right-hand of Fellowship is given him by a few brethren, who will soon leave him mostly to struggle on alone. Even the installing prayer, which lifts him up to heaven, is but a solemn begging of aid in the heavy task he must discharge on earth. Therefore, in addition to

what is thus said, I have been desired to see to it that this form of proceeding do not close, without your being reminded that this undertaking, so huge for the smallest number of persons, as embracing the present existence with eternity, is not his enterprise alone, but yours also. If possible, it is yours more than his, not only in the incommunicable responsibleness of every single soul in the matter of its own salvation, but in that corporate character in which, as you had a being before he came, you will survive, as a society, when he goes or dies.

I am the more anxious to say this, because, in our theory, or way of talking, we are apt to have a different impression. In this land of freedom, we are, in some respects, somewhat savagely free, as the aboriginals were before us. In our often wild notion of personal independence and congregational liberty, we set the minister apart, as if it were his business to carry on the whole concern. Church and people, like the tower and its host on the elephant's back, in the ancient oriental battles, are built on his poor shoulders. All our conversation proceeds on this assumption. We ask, How is such a minister, in such a place, doing? How is that pastor, last settled, getting along? — the very expression implying the heavy pack we suppose him to be under. We might, I think, as well ask sometimes, How is such a society doing? How is the Church getting along, and treating or co-operating with its

minister? Your minister, I doubt not, beyond all the force of our feeble words here spoken, is, in his own heart, ordained, installed, self-consecrated, and truly devoted to your spiritual welfare. He has "that within which passeth show." He will continue to be engaged, as already elsewhere he has been engaged, in earnest meditation, — in that toil of the brain, sorer and more wearing, as whoever has done both well knows, than any handiwork of land or sea, — to enrich your mind, and edify your character. Few days, I will stand sponsor for him, will dawn, in which his busy thought will not range through heaven and earth and the word of God, absorbing him, for your training, to those realities, before which the superficial, noisy world shrinks to a cipher, and passes like a dream. Meantime, what will you be doing to fulfil your ordination? Thinking of the gospel salvation he preaches, as your own great affair? punctually and constantly attendant upon his counsels, and embodying them in your deeds? with that inward hearing, to which the ear is but a portal, wide-open to his voice; and that interior soil, to which all the fields' harvests are but fading and decay, ready for the seed he scatters, till every incorruptible truth is rooted in your and your children's breasts? An art or a science cannot by any professor be taught, unless the pupil conspire: how can religion be imparted to a listless and inattentive assembly, called an audience by courtesy, because many are present, and one

speaks? O my friends! this is a mutual and common work of yours and his. If you are going to be practically heedless of that work; if, like some others, you are going, by and by, as a matter of curiosity or mere inclination, in your fatigue or vacancy, to ask, on Sunday morning, Shall we go to church to-day, to hear him, or whomever he may put in his place, preach? — then I tell you this whole ceremony that you have got up here is a mockery, and our invitation to take part in it an insult. The seriousness of this day's doings — and what seriousness, under the sun that shines so pleasantly on this occasion, is greater? — is shared with him by you as much as by any man or woman among you is a marriage vow. Nay, his own re-ordination here he cannot fulfil, in any terms of outward success, save with your strong-siding and seconding zeal. This house is full enough now: how will it be commonly by and by? You will no doubt get along after a fashion. There is a kind of tenacious life, far more than ever in individual old age, in an old society. Its inveterate form dies late and dies hard, if it dies at all. But the members of it will be continually dying, with or wanting that life which alone is the pilgrim's staff and food to and in the better land; and, while the journey lengthens here below, travellers, without the Son of God and the Holy Spirit, will drag out but a living death; for even this world, as well as the future, Christ only can bless, and sweeten the very air of our existence.

What, too, is very hard, some of the sad consequences, if not the very doom, of this living death will pass over to him who, though alive, in parallel with the most awful of recorded punishments, will be bound to the corpse. In some sense and measure, it is a fatal law: *like people, like priest.* He doubtless will do much to make you, and you to make him. Nor is there a child here, or one, for its tender age left at home to-day lest it should tire of the service, so small as not to do something for or against him; I mean not the man merely, but the minister. His heart will be your pulse; and, whether it beat high with hope and courage and thanksgiving for the crown on his labors, or dwindle to a puny thread-like intermittency between exhaustion and spurring a jaded soul to new effort, — which is the condition of ministers not a few, — you will decide. The failure, stain, wound, or the honor, success, and triumph, are to be your own. You can give him your love and confidence, and make to him spiritual revelations of dignity and sacredness, beyond any records in kings' cabinets or secrets of state. You can show him the ground where to toil, knowing that, as in the intervals and patches between these New-England rocks and headlands, every thing good will grow there. O blessed showing! every minister here will respond to my words. You can point out to him places in the spiritual world, richer than California gulches, for him to explore, and draw up treasure for the kingdom of

God. You can inspire his bosom, make his soul rejoice, his face shine, and his very blood run quicker and fuller in his veins; or you can walk before him with a false, untrustful air, with covert suspicion, and — what is the most unhandsome thing, I think, we ever see in this world — that cold glazing on your eyes, through which no electricity of earth or heaven, truth or feeling, can ever strike; for God holds back his thunder, and does not send his lightning through such conductors. I pray you, relapse into no such icy and uncandid state. Be awake, and be frank with him! Whatever else you may be, be not indifferent! Sooner blame him, find fault, clear up and settle every question! I know, and will answer for it, though I have not exchanged such a word with him, he will like it better. Be not dull; for, while so much is said of dull preaching, I must be permitted to suggest there is such a thing as dull hearing. Is the tongue the only organ liable to be slow, and subject to palsy; or may there be a hardness and heaviness in the ear? If you be dull, do not presume to substitute any complaint that he is so, for an honest self-accusation that you began it, and were so first. Angelically trouble the waters of the pool, that they may heal; for Bethesda itself needs that stirring, and can have no virtue otherwise. Move the mixture, if you would turn its opaque mass, looking neither like one thing nor another, into crystal such as enters into the composition of the New Jerusalem.

A true, sympathizing minister's genius, like the genius in conversation of some men who have no self-luminous power, is conditioned upon certain qualities and manifestations of those he may be with. The improvisatore, spontaneous as his speech may appear, cannot speak so well where nobody listens. Your minister's eloquence cannot be all in his mouth: it must be largely in your hearts. Mysterious is the law. Who, that ever prayed or preached in several successive companies, has not perceived it? The minister's life is like the charmed life we read of, that waxes or wastes with another life close by. As on grave-stones you will see that one dear relative has often died very shortly after another, so minister and society are apt to die very near together; and the Church itself then comes to look like the graveyard by its side, thick only with memorials telling of that presence of death, spiritual as well as bodily, among the abodes of men, which is the great occasion of the human soul's outcry for succor to God. Much is said in these days, more than in any former ones, of sick or invalid ministers. Certainly you can make your minister sick, if you will; though not, it may be, with the sickness for which a man goes South or crosses the sea. You can strike a chill upon his heart, a fever through his nerves, a consumption into his spirit. Surely it does not appear now as if you would ever do this; but how will it be next year? We know you accept our friend with a hospitable will already.

Only suffer us, his brethren, to commend him to you again, as we know verily he has commended himself. Set yourselves at school with him to the Master, his and yours. Do not ever say you cannot quite follow or understand him, till you are sure yours is not the carnal mind, which understandeth neither the things of God nor of a good man, but the spiritual mind, which alone can understand spiritual things; and what else but spiritual things, I pray you, has he to deal in? Show not that sad sign of moral and spiritual declension, of stumbling at the length of his prayer or exhortation. If you tell him his half-hour is too long, he will sadly question whether you like to hearken at all. It will not be long to you, if your heart is in it. How often do political, social, domestic appeals and recollections make hours pass like moments! Shall religion never triumph so? He is not interested in religion who is never by it made unconscious of the passage of time. To have the time hang heavy upon you is a melancholy omen that you regard religion itself but as a form, a show, a decency, a respectability before men. This, however, will not pass for religion with Almighty God. Look, then, patiently at the light the watchman kindles, as you do when you toss on the neighboring waves; and hear the alarm of the trumpet he blows.

In fine, give him the master-help and magic influence of a generous and hearty sympathy. Support him outwardly. I know not your method. If it is

by a tax, pay it cheerfully, and do not grumble about it. It is a trifle, — a bagatelle, I once by a worthy layman heard it called, — compared with what you receive from a good minister. But, above all, inwardly sympathize with him. Christian sympathy, which is oneness in God and Christ, will be in all ways to you strength and speed and perfect accomplishment. The consenting feeling of a multitude is perhaps the strongest thing in this world. On a spring-tide of sympathy, blown up by bold and eloquent breath, how marvellously the most dangerous novelties will run in hot career through the land, and, with their rush, bear men to extravagant and romantic acts, even to the very verge of madness! True sympathy, that communion which is the characteristic of our religion, is the vehicle of our souls to peace, to virtue, to heaven. The celestial shore is not like that on which your beautiful city is built, a shore which any lonely sailor can reach, but only those united in love to God and love to one another. The very path is through one another's breasts. There is no road beside. I say not these things to you in undignified entreaty. To ministers and people, justice at length is, I believe, done here as hereafter. So is there no absolute necessity for us to beg it on either side. On all sides, the best justice is a Christian sympathy. This sympathy will not rear a society in name, strong only in its minister, or, like some societies, proud of its minister, and making a religion of their pride; a con-

gregation of curious intellects, eyes following fashion, or itching ears; an assemblage of persons, gathered by rhetorical gifts, and scattered on Sunday morning from the temple-door by an alarm to their tastes; a loose company of individuals, paying to their minister's influence the poorest of tributes, in being disintegrated by his exchanges, and dispersed like the sand at his death: but a society indeed, compacted together, not momentarily bound, like a lecture-audience, to the occupant of a desk; a real Church, living in Christ, and not in a mortal's breath; a host looking immortal on earth, cheering their earthly guide as they move in his presence or absence; and, over his ashes, in their union still, bringing him nobler praise than would be any boast of his talents or blowing abroad of titles on the trumpet of fame.

Brethren and friends of the Church here present, — might a yearning of my own heart toward this place possibly win your pardon to the further remark, ere I conclude and sit down, that nowhere else in this world could such motives combine to make earnest and heart-felt these words from me of official duty. Your present speaker has indeed a strange disturbance of sensations, a confused doubling of his consciousness, and a puzzling search after his identity, as he stands before you. The boy that sat in yonder seat, and had his soul in him first wakened by the voice whose ascending prayer to-day brings back the haunting memories of spiritual influence from a

score and a half of years ago, — that boy could hardly, by any power of imagination, or in any wild vision of the night, have foreseen himself in the actual shape of a man, for all he once received returning grateful acknowledgments, under the form of admonitions, to the elders he so revently looked up to and still honors, as well as to the younger generation, to whom — oh strangely, swiftly, forever-turning wheel of time! — he is himself unknown. It seems to him as if he ought not to talk here as he has done. It seems almost wrong, almost immodest, almost unseemly, to him. It seems to him as if he ought rather to be silently listening there in his father's pew, with emotions by his benignant teacher quite unsuspected, — for, in his simplicity and diffidence, he would not have dared to disclose them; and that, after the service, he should walk solitary home, not conferring with flesh and blood, because the chambers of his bosom were resounding with an eloquence of reason and religion which the presence of that teacher shall not hinder him from declaring the most original in thought, the most profound in persuasion, and the most lasting in impression, as well as rich in responsive echoes, that ever rang through his ears upon the deepest fibres within. He would be happy to have his humble utterance on this occasion interpreted but as one that he is able to catch, of those echoes which travel farther, through wider intervals of our life, than any of church-going bell, or other sounds on earth, save only

of the human voice breathing out wonders, to penetrate and melt, from the human breast. Understanding how many things there are to discourage a minister; aware experimentally how he may be cast down by a sense of his short-comings more than by any complaint out of his own bosom; and how, even by the lowliest testimonies, all the more peradventure for their very lowliness, one may be cheered, — he would thankfully tell at last to his minister what from the former days he has felt; and would choose this audience of the whole congregation for the organ of a communication, properly private indeed, as its author is very sensible, yet somehow, an instinct mysteriously whispers, belonging to them as to him, though never made before. Let him presume still further so much upon his private connection here, as to add the tender of his best personal wishes to this fresh servant of the Lord, in the prayer to Almighty God that *he*, in his turn, may have tributes like that which is now rendered from an indebted soul.

FIRST CHURCH IN PORTLAND.

The First Pastor of the First Church in Portland, Maine, was the Rev. Thomas Smith, of Boston. He began to preach in the new settlement, which at that time was called Falmouth, in June, 1725. He was ordained to the ministry there, March 8, 1827, at the age of twenty-five. He died in office, May 25, 1795, in his ninety-fourth year; having taken part in the services of the pulpit till within two years previous to his death, and having held his pastoral relation sixty-eight years, two months, and seventeen days.

The Rev. Samuel Deane, of Norton, Mass., was ordained as colleague with Mr. Smith, Oct. 17, 1764. He was in his sixty-third year, when his venerable colleague died in 1795; but continued in the sole charge of the Church until June 7, 1809. He died, Nov. 12, 1814, in the eighty-second year of his age, and the fifty-first of his ministry.

The Rev. Ichabod Nichols was ordained as colleague with Dr. Deane, June 7, 1809.

The Journals of the Rev. Mr. Smith, and the Rev. Dr. Deane, richly and faithfully illustrated by notes, have been edited with great care; and, in connection with a summary History of Portland, embracing much matter of interest, have been published by William Willis. [Portland: Joseph S. Bailey, 1849.] Mr. Willis's volume is an exemplary work of its kind, and will be found to have many attractions for the antiquarian as a faithful and elaborate chronicle of the past.

Order of Exercises

AT THE

INSTALLATION OF THE REV. HORATIO STEBBINS.

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CHANT BY THE CHOIR.

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HYMN.

SERMON,

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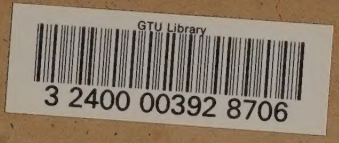
HYMN.

CONCLUDING PRAYER,

BY THE REV. L. G. WARE, OF AUGUSTA.

BENEDICTION,

BY THE REV. H. STEBBINS.



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